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ABSTRACT

Born into slavery in 1856, Booker T. Washington overcame staggering obstacles to lead emancipated blacks into a quiet revolution against illiteracy and economic dependence. In his lifetime, the national focus became more democratic, and the education of adults proliferated, bringing social change. The first public efforts to educate freed slaves were instigated by the northern military, philanthropic groups such as the American Missionary Association, and the short-lived Freedmen's Bureau. Washington formed his early vision of the world in Hale's Ford, Virginia, an isolated rural crossroads where conditions were bleak for both blacks and whites, and at Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, where the principal, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, became his most significant white mentor. Imbued with Armstrong's model of "head-hands-heart" education, Washington believed that to compete for justice, people must be trained and their training must be determined by the job market. He refined this idea at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which he founded, pioneering national and international programs in agriculture, industry, education, health, housing, and politics. Through his work at Tuskegee, he established himself as an agent for social change through adult education. Placing high value on the "uncommon good sense" of the older population, his new movement extended education to the masses of rural adults. (Appendixes included chapter notes, a 286-item bibliography, and an index.) (YLB)

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